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P 201953Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0349
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 8892
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6267
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0241
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7451
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4498
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0422
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4831
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6197
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7113
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 1881
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1715
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000434

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ENVR](#) [ASEC](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: CONTINUED MIXED MESSAGES

REF: A. LA PAZ 418
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 409
[1](#)C. LA PAZ 407
[1](#)D. LA PAZ 373

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: While official media give extensive coverage of Foreign Secretary David Choquehuanca's March 19 announcement that Bolivia seeks to "rebuild mutual trust" with the USG, President Evo Morales' March 20 statement that he will "personally investigate the presence of external agents" and other recent hostile actions by his administration indicate the government is likely to continue its aggressively anti-USG campaign. End summary.

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Good Cop Choquehuanca Plays Nice
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[1](#)2. (C) In a March 19 press conference, Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca, just back from Nicaragua, announced the Bolivian government's intention to improve relations with the United States "in a framework of mutual respect." Choquehuanca said a government commission would travel to Washington and that "representatives of the U.S. will come to Bolivia." "The U.S. has manifested its desire to work. We will... form commissions to rechannel our relations with new rules of the game." (Note: We have not had any official communication regarding a Bolivian commission traveling to the U.S. End note.) According to official media reports, Choquehuanca called this moment "an inflection point" in bilateral relations. Press reports went on to cite the impact of a recent meeting between Brazil President Inacio Lula de Silva and President Obama, in which the Brazilian president encouraged a rapprochement between the U.S. and Latin America, specifically referring to Chavez and Morales.

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Meanwhile, Morales Attacks (Again)
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[1](#)3. (U) Essentially repeating his and his deputies' accusations from March 11, 12, and 13 (Reftels B, C), President Morales on March 20 renewed his promise to

"personally investigate" anyone who is "selling information to external agents." Morales has said previously that "foreign agents" were "buying the loyalty" of Bolivian security forces and that "there is an army official who has direct contact with the CIA." On March 15, Government Minister Alfredo Rada made a separate accusation that the police guarding the Embassy were "truly working as officers of the U.S. Embassy" and implied they were supplying intelligence to the CIA (Reftel B). These statements followed the March 9 expulsion of Embassy officer Francisco (Frank) Martinez (Reftel D).

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Comment
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¶4. (C) In a meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Hugo Fernandez (Reftel A), Charge raised the long-standing proposal of a Bolivian-U.S. USAID commission. While Choquehuanca may play the role of moderate for the benefit of domestic and international press eager to show an improvement in bilateral relations, the rest of the government's actions and rhetoric indicate otherwise. Continuous proclamations of CIA presence in the country, "personal" investigations by Morales into supposedly seditious activities, and accusations of nefarious Embassy involvement with the police force, not to mention the recent expulsion of an Embassy officer, more than counterbalance Choquehuanca's message. This press conference is not consistent with other recent messages sent or actions taken by the Morales government, and Choquehuanca's Obama-Lula references simply attempt to paint a pretty picture in the leadup to the Summit of the Americas.
End comment.
LAMBERT